

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BANGKO 19033 270930Z
ACTION DHA-02

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 EA-06 SSO-00 NSCE-00 IO-06
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C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 19033

LIMDIS

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: SREF
SUBJ: UNHCR INDOCHINESE REFUGEE STATUS IN THAILAND

REF: STATE 204849

1. UNDERSTAND DEPARTMENT'S CONCERN AND I WILL SEEK EARLY
OCCASION TO DISCUSS REFUGEE PROBLEM, PARTICULARLY FORCIBLE
REPATRIATION, WITH PRIME MINISTER. I AM REQUESTING 10 MINUTES
LONG WITH PRIME MINISTER AFTER ACCOMPANYING JUSTICE MARSHALL ON
HIS CALL AUG. 30. (IF THAT DOES NOT WORK OUT, I WILL REQUEST CALL
LATER IN WEEK.)

2. IN DISCUSSION WITH PRIME MINISTER, I BELIEVE I SHOULD LIMIT
MYSELF TO MAKING UNMISTAKABLY CLEAR OUR SERIOUS CONCERN ABOUT
ANY MOVE IN DIRECTION OF FORCIBLE REPATRIATION AND VERY NEGATIVE
EFFECT THIS WOULD HAVE ON US ATTITUDE. IF DEPARTMENT AGREES, I
WOULD PREFER TO MAKE MORE FORMAL, BROADER PRESENTATIONS TO IN-
TERIOR MINISTER SAMAK WHOM I AM SEEING SEPTEMBER ONE AND MINISTRY

OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS. I BELIEVE THIS PREFERABLE AND WOULD ASSURE
MORE SYSTEMATIC CABINET CONSIDERATION THAN REPRESENTATION SOLELY
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PAGE 02 BANGKO 19033 270930Z

TO PRIMIN. I CAN ALSO INFORMALLY BE SURE OUR CONCERNS ARE KNOWN
O MILITARY SIDE WHICH FIGURES PROMINENTLY IN DECISION MAKING
IN THIS AREA BECAUSE OF ITS SECURITY CONNOTATIONS.

3. BY ABOVE APPROACHES, I BELIEVE WE CAN ASSURE THE RTG FULLY
UNDERSTANDS OUR PRESENT CONCERN ABOUT FORCIBLE REPATRIATION.
HOWEVER, THE BASIC PROBLEMS RELATING TO LONG TERM RESETTLEMENT

AND OTHER ASPECTS OF THE REFUGEE QUESTION MUST BE ADDRESSED IN A MORE CAREFUL, LESS HEAVYHANDED MANNER THAN THAT OUTLINED PARA 7 REFTL. AS WE POINTED OUT IN OUR JOINT RECOMMENDATIONS WITH GAUSS/ROSENBLATT, IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT WE INITIATE AN EARLY QUIET DIALOGUE WITH RTG, ONE INVOLVING SOME HARD PRIOR DECISIONS ON OUR OWN PART PARTICULARLY WITH REGAME TO FURTHER US/THIRD CNTRY INTAKE OF REFUGEES. IF WE ARE TOO OVERPOWERING, AND PRECIPITATE IN OUR APPROACH ON THIS SUBJECT WE RUN RISK OF EXTREMELY NEGATIVE THAI RESPONSE, COMPLCNATING ONGOING PROGRAMS AND THE NEEDED PRIVATE DIALPUE. WE MUST NOT LOSE SIGHT OF FACT THAT, RHETORIC ASIDE, THE THAIS ARE STILL THE MOST GENEROUS, AS WELL AS THE MOST OVERBURDENED IN THEIR HANDLING OF THE REFUGEE PROBLEMS. FURTHER, WE MUST REALIZE THAT RESETTLEMENT PROBLEM IS DOMINANTLY A POLITICAL QUESTION OF HIGHEST SENSITIVITY AND EMOTION IN THAI CONTEXT. RTG WILL NOT BE FORCED ON THIS BASIC ISSUE BY A PREMATURE, COERCIVE PPROACH. ANY NEAR PUBLIC CONFRONTATIONAL APPROACH NOW IS NOT THE WAY TO PROCEED. WE NEED TO DEMONSTRATE SOME UNDERSTANDING OF THAI'S PROBLEM WHILE QUIETLY PRESSING FOR ACCEPTANCE OF SUBSTANTIAL DE FACTO RESETTLEMENT.

4. ALSO ECONOMIC CONSIDERATIONS DO NOT, IN FACT WEIGH HEAVY IN RTG CONCERNS ON RESETTLEMENT. RTG PROBABL;2ELL REALIZES THAT THERE WOULD BE SIGNIFICANT INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR RESETTLEMENT AND/OR REFUGEE SELF SUFFICIENCY EFFORTS. INDEEDLN WE HAVE ALREADY CONVERVED TO THEM OUR INTEREST IN DISCUSSING THIS ASPECT.

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PAGE 03 BANGKO 19033 270930Z

5. GIVEN ABOVE, IF DEPT. AGREES IN MY FORMAL REPRESENTATIONS TO

SAMAK AND MFA, I WILL STRESS THE FOLLOWING POINTS:

A) OUR DEEP CONCERN AND OPPOSITION TO ANY FORCIBLE REPATRIATION.

B) EXTREMELY NEGATIVE IMPACT SUCH A STEP WOULD HAVE, NOT ONLY ON USG AND CONGRESSIONAL SUPPORT FOR REFUGEE PROGRAMS, BUT ALSO THE INTERNATIONAL IMAGE OF THE RTG.

C) THE MAJOR CONTRIBUTIONS WE HAVE ALREADY MADE AND OUR READINESS IN THE NEAR FUTURE TO DISCUSS MORE SERIOUSLY THE MORE SSSIC PROBLEMS RELATING TO REFUGEES AND RESETTLEMENT.

D) AND, OUR EXPECTATION THAT THE RTG WILL NOT EMBARK ON ANY CHANGE IN ITS CURRENT POLICIES UNTIL WE HAVE HAD THE OPPOURTUNITY FOR EXTENSIVE PRIVATE DISCUSSIONS.

6. BELIEVE ABOVE APPROACH MEETS OUR IMMEDIATE NEEDS ON FORCIBLE REPATRIATION PROBLEM. AT SAME TIME IT WOULD NOT PRECIPITATE A PREMATURE NEGATIVE RTG RESPONSE ON RESETTLEMENT. HOWEVER THERE

IS A CONCOMITANT NEED FOR US TO MOVE TO AN EARLY SUBSTANTIVE
DIALOGUE, AS WE HAVE PREVIOUSLY RECOMMENDED, CERTAINLY BY MID-
SEPTEMBER.
O'DONOHUE

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